



TOWN OF UPTON, MASSACHUSETTS

BOARD OF SELECTMEN

May 11, 2016

MEMO TO: Board of Selectmen
FROM: Blythe C. Robinson
Town Manager
RE: Access Northeast Project - Algonquin Gas Pipeline

The purpose of this memo is to give you an update on some important upcoming dates regarding this project, and other aspects of the project you may be hearing about. There are several public entities involved in this project and they are separately holding meetings and have set dates by which comments must be submitted from interested parties.

As background on this project, Algonquin Gas wants to move forward to expand its natural gas transmission system in the northeast to meet demand, particularly in the winter. The project would expand pipeline, extend some pipeline loops, and install new lateral pipelines, one of which is called the "West Boylston Lateral" that would go through Upton. The lateral is intended to be 26.8 miles long of 16" diameter pipe, and four miles would be in Upton, generally in the layout of the existing high tension electricity lines. A formal application to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is not being made until November of this year. FERC has reviewed a preliminary application and based upon that is seeking comments on various issues including public safety, project reliability, environmental concerns and impacts on land use and ground water. There are two regulatory agencies holding hearings at this time.

First, the Massachusetts Energy Facilities Siting Board has filed for intervenor status in this process. The MA Siting Board participates in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) proceedings involving natural gas pipelines in order to represent the interests of the Commonwealth and its residents. The Siting Board has been holding these hearings, and their deadline for comments before they submit on behalf of the State is **May 20th**. FERC is also holding public scoping sessions and has requested comments on environmental issues related to the project, and comments on that topic are due to them by **May 30th**. I understand that FERC has been requested to extend this deadline and it will likely do so to mid to late June.

It is important to note that the State Department of Public Utilities (DPU) is also involved in this process. Their role is to review agreements that Algonquin will have between they and National Grid and Eversource to determine whether or not Algonquin has a sufficient number of customers for the gas it plans to bring into the Northeast to purchase that gas. Should Algonquin fail to satisfy the State that they do have such agreements in place, the State could

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deny them the ability to move forward. I understand that is the primary reason why the pipeline that had been proposed by Kinder Morgan north of us did not move forward as they had not achieved the customer base that was required.

It has been suggested that the Town file for “intervenor status” in the project which would enable the Town to be an official party to the proceedings. That involves filing briefs, appearing in court, etc. This would require Town Counsel services and I have reached out to Counsel to ask them what they would anticipate in terms of involvement and cost for such a process. Please note that until Algonquin files formal application to FERC in the fall, FERC will not accept requests until that time.

I was in touch with Jon Bonsall, the Counsel retained by Algonquin to work with communities on this project, and I discussed with him some of the concerns being circulated about it. I wanted to provide you with his feedback, and also let you know that he would be happy to attend one of your meetings to speak about and answer questions that you or our residents might have.

There has been concern expressed that the purpose of the pipeline is to be able to bring gas to our area for export. He explained that this is not the intent of the project. The primary purpose is to bring gas to store for the winter months when there historically has been a shortage of gas in the area. Gas will be brought in throughout the year, and any excess in warmer months will be liquefied and stored in Acushnet, and then put back into the system when needed. There will be a spur so that gas can be supplied to Maine as they have a shortage as well, but none is intended to leave the country. As to the pipeline layout in Upton, most of the survey work has been done, and he would be able to provide an update with further clarity (than just that it is in the area of the high tension lines) which we probably will want to review.

I would recommend that we have a meeting soon with our residents to hear their concerns so that the Board can submit comments to FERC for its deadline. The State Siting Board’s deadline may be too soon to meet, but at least they are acting on the behalf of all communities and residents on this topic and I believe they have heard comments from Upton in their process. I think a public meeting with Algonquin would also be valuable so that when the formal application to FERC is made later this year, we are well informed so the Board can decide how it wants to go forward.